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EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 328.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING APRIL 13, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

FROM HIS YOUTH UP

I.

"AMBITION has been my curse," said Arkell. "All my hopes have faded like sickly incense fumes of unreality."

He broke off with a short laugh.

"Disappointments are inevitable," answered the girl at his side, gazing into the fire through half-closed lids.

"Your life," he declared, "has been one of happiness, and mine of sorrow. From my youth up ill-luck has followed me. My aims have been frustrated and cramped at every turn."

"How so?"

"As a boy I devoted myself to study, and eventually went to college; but there my health stepped in to run all hope of success, breaking down when I most required physical strength. A friend—a very eminent man—while I was still weak and nerveless, dealt me the cruelest cut of all. He had followed my progress, struck by my dogged perseverance.

"He told me most forcibly that I had not the mental capacity to distinguish myself, at the same time advising me to leave college before taxing my brain further. I *felt* the wisdom of his words, and, in a frenzy of disappointment, left the University to seek fresh fields. Crushed and woe-begone, still I craved for success. Thirsting for excitement, I joined a company of strolling players, with whom I travelled in the provinces for three years. All that time I worked hard upon a play, with which I intended to checkmate fate and triumph.

"With this idea firmly implanted in my mind, I sought out a rich uncle, my father's only brother, who had recently returned from America, and induced him to provide me with sufficient capital to start a theatre on my own account. This he gladly did, fully believing in the ultimate success of my venture. It is gall and wormwood to remember now the rhapsodies in which I indulged. At last I was to pacify my craving for distinction! The game was in my own hands, and I felt confident of scoring a success. Alas! for the lame blunder—the date is not so far distant but that you can recall the shame and humiliation which fell to the lot of that unfortunate actor, manager, and author—Adrian Arkell!"

"It was a crime," she said. "Do not let us talk of it."

"You mean the criticisms?" he asked eagerly.

"No," she replied, unswerving from the truth; "the play."

"Candour is sometimes difficult to digest," he muttered, kicking the fender. "My folly has received its final death blow at your hands."

"Then at least you owe me some gratitude. I cannot fall down and worship before false gods."

Alys smiled a little bitterly as she spoke. If he only knew how it hurt her to pain him! Why had he been mad enough to court the sneers of the public, when his lines might have fallen in pleasant places had he curbed his ambition!

She felt something more than pity for him, as she watched a bright flame wreathing itself round a pillar of smoke, comparing his life to the dark vapour, and hers to the flash of fire enveloping it in a warm glow. How dearly she would have loved to lift the heavily burdened soul to her own sphere of light. An almost irresistible impulse seized her to tell him that she had given him her heart unasked; but while the thought flashed through her mind,' the sound of voices reached them.

"That is Julia," she said uneasily. "I do so dislike Julia."

"You mean your sister-in-law, Mrs. Fergusson?"

"Yes. She is a worldly type of woman, frivolous to her finger tips! I get saturated with her frivolity. I find myself repeating Julia's sayings and trading on them. I even copy Julia's dresses; isn't it hateful of me?"

He ignored her remark, and rose mechanically.

"Must you go? Perhaps it is as well. I have to run the gauntlet of Julia's criticism."

"You need fear no one, Miss Fergusson—much less a woman."

"But women are more formidable foes than men."

"Ever since Eve tempted Adam, men have repaid his wrongs with interest."

He held out his hand, and in another moment he had gone.

"You are to be congratulated!" said Julia, entering the room like a petticoated whirlwind.

"Why?"

"For making a conquest of that bear, Arkell. Everyone knows he is a woman hater. Play with him, my dear, but do not love him."

"Why not?"

"Love brings sadness, Alys. If you marry the object of your affections he disappoints you, and if you don't marry him he worries you."

"But you are happy."

Julia sank down before the fire and laughed. "Oh! don't take me for an example. I married your brother, and he is a man in a thousand. Ring for some more tea—here is Doctor Musgrave."

Julia, kneeling on the hearthrug, nodded to the Doctor as he entered. He was too familiar a friend to be greeted ceremoniously. His eyes brightened visibly as they rested upon Alys perched in the window-seat, and after exchanging a few conventional words with Julia, he joined her.

"I wish you could cure a troubled spirit," she said, leaning her head against the curtains with a sigh.

"First I must know the trouble," he replied.

A slight flush rose to the girl's face.

"I am miserably restless and dissatisfied. When I desire a thing greatly I cannot wait for it—I want it at once, or not at all."

"At the present time, then, you require—what?"

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"The moon—but I do not ask you to procure it for me."

"Everything is possible where there is a will."

"You think so?"

"I am certain of it."

Julia glided between them, laying her head on Alys' shoulder. "Are you looking at the sunset?" she said, assuming a dreamy expression. "I love the going down of the sun! It makes me think of the eve of life, when in our hoary age we too shall wane and sink behind the veil."

"She is trying to harrow our feelings in artistic language," laughed Alys, turning to the Doctor, "but to tell you the truth no one has a greater horror of growing old. She declared only the other day that she would commit suicide at the first sign of a crow's-foot."

"Alys can afford to laugh," was the retort, "since she is in the hey-day of youth."

"My horse is tired out with a long day's rounds," said the Doctor, "and I must not keep the poor beast standing. I only ran in to leave a message for your mother. Good-bye and good luck to you, Miss Alys. This is my advice: Dare all, hope all, venture all, but, above these three things, never despair." Then he was gone.

"What did he mean?" asked Julia, sharply.

"It was only a prescription," replied Alys, laughing.

II.

The following night Alys met Adrian in the full glare of a ballroom. She was pale, and her lips trembled as she greeted him.

"I thought you never danced," she said.

"I came here to see you," he replied, "and my presence has caused some comment. I am a novelty on such an occasion."

"How delightful to meet something original! But I guessed your reason." She lowered her eyes, breathing hard. "Mr. Arkell, I must speak to you alone."

"Come this way."

She followed him to the conservatory, while her heart beat high with expectation. She glanced nervously round, as a blush of embarrassment rose to her cheek.

"What do you wish to say, Miss Fergusson?"

"*You* ask me that?" cried the girl, raising her eyes indignantly to his. "Can it be possible that I have been the victim of a trick?"

"I—I do not know," stammered Adrian.

With a swift movement she drew a letter from her dress. A strangely pathetic look crept into her eyes as a sense of immeasurable distance seemed to rise between them.

"What troubles you?" he asked eagerly. "For Heaven's sake, don't look like that!"

Alys clasped her hands imploringly.

"Here is your letter," she said.

He took the paper from her, though she pretended to hold it back, with a gesture of mute horror at his action.

"If it is not yours," she whispered in a strained voice, "for pity's sake return it without a word."

"Do you rebuke me for reading?" he pleaded, drawing closer to her side. "I would that I could claim the authorship! Had some angel of God intervened to plead my cause, it would have been in no better language. My mysterious representative has put into words what I should not have dared entertain in my heart."

Alys trembled from head to foot, and a blaze of triumph flashed from her eyes. In a moment her hands were grasped by Adrian, while he drew her head down softly on to his shoulder.

The sheltering palm trees seemed created to veil lovers in a temple of foliage.

"I feel," he whispered, "as though I had often held your hands and kissed your hair."

"Yet you never thought of me before to-night?"

There was a long, sweet silence. At last Adrian broke it with the thought uppermost in his mind.

"Who could have written this letter?"

"Ah! who indeed!" she answered slowly. "Yet after all, what does it matter?"

"It was Julia," he said, tightening his grasp on her hand; "your sister-in-law."

"Why should you suspect her?"

"She is jealous of your youth and beauty, and thinking I was indifferent, hoped to slight you."

"That is a very unpleasant thought, but do not condemn her upon suspicion."

As she spoke, the perfume clinging to Julia's chiffons pervaded the air.

"Are you not going to dance?" she cried as she rustled by. "There are a score of people waiting to be introduced to your partner, Mr. Arkell."

She laughed half mockingly, and, waving her fan, passed out of sight.

"I wish we could go away," he said. "I dread the talk an engagement creates."

"You do not deserve to be married, for you are a hermit at heart still."

"Any publicity is hateful to me, since the finger of scorn has been so often pointed at me."

"Here is Doctor Musgrave."

"Please forget that unfortunate play. Come to the ballroom and see what a rush there will be for my programme."

Adrian tried to detain her, but she rose and left him watching her disconsolately, as Doctor Musgrave claimed the dance.

When the music ceased she confided to him the news of her engagement.

A few moments later the doctor escaped from the ballroom, and dashing out into the night, hurried home scarcely able to breathe.

III.

Time flew quickly, but love had not kept pace with its wings. That of Alys somewhat waned ere the wedding day approached, though her dogged nature refused to admit the fact even to herself. Before the important event she wrote to Doctor Musgrave wishing to see him.

"I was afraid you would not come," she said somewhat shyly, as he arrived in answer to her summons.

"I am entirely at your command," he replied, "to serve

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"Do you rebuke me for reading?"

you faithfully to my dying day, if you would only give me the chance."

"How delightfully loyal!" motioning him into a chair; "I have been longing to unburden my soul to someone, and you are the only living creature to whom I can speak. I have done a mean despicable thing!"

"Impossible!"

"Not at all. Unfortunately sometimes 'all things are possible.' But I will explain. When I fell in love with Adrian, I could not wait to see whether, in time, he would ask me to marry him. So I wrote a letter to myself, disguising my hand like his. I conceived the idea of acting a little comedy for my own amusement, laying my heart bare to the man who had only to ask to receive it. But ever since that night my deception has troubled me. The worst of it was, he determined to discover the mysterious correspondent, and finally attributed the deed to Julia."

"It is late to reproach yourself now."

"And you despise me?"

"I could think no ill of you," he replied, turning his face away. Alys fancied his voice trembled.

"Then give me a word of seasonable advice. Ought I to tell Adrian?"

"Your wedding is to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"Then say nothing about it. You have left it too late."

"Why?"

"Mr. Arkell is not looking well, and is easily provoked. I do not want a cloud to hang over your marriage feast. He probably would love you more, but possibly might love you less. Why own to a man that *you* sought *him*?"

Her cheek paled, and she trembled slightly. "I wanted a man's opinion," she said.

. . . . . .

It was the morning of his wedding-day, when, contrary to custom, Adrian rushed into the house and inquired anxiously for Miss Fergusson. He was hot with running, and carried an open telegram and letter in his hand.

"Read these," he exclaimed. "Read! read! read!"

Alys glanced at the telegram first.

"Mr. Arkell passed peacefully away this morning."

"Your uncle?" she asked.

"Yes."

"I am sorry," she began, but Adrian interrupted her.

"The letter is from him to me," he continued, thrusting it into her hand, "dictated last night with his dying breath, during an hour's consciousness after a paralytic stroke."

She scanned it slowly.

"Before daybreak I shall have gone. You will get this letter on your wedding morning. I have loved you, Adrian, as a son, and it is to you I leave my entire fortune. Accept it as a wedding gift, and use it well."

Alys touched the paper reverently, gazing at it in solemn silence. Adrian waited for her to speak, then pointed again to the pages with fingers trembling from excitement.

"Don't you take it in? Look! It is as clear as daylight: '*To you I leave my entire fortune!*' I hardly know the amount, but it is something enormous, and I always believed he had bequeathed it to charitable institutions."

"Let us try to remember his last words," she said. "Use it well."

Adrian chuckled to himself as he mentally calculated the sum. Alys drew away from him with a sudden sense of disgust, for not a word of sorrow had passed his lips.

"How shall you like marrying a millionaire?" he asked. "We ought to be the happiest couple in creation. I love filthy lucre." He laughed loudly and tried to kiss her, but she withdrew from his embrace.

"After the ceremony," she cried, with an attempt at merriment. "It will be all the sweeter for waiting," and with these words she left him.

As he wended his way down the drive he picked up a handful of shingle and tossed it in the air. "As I throw these pebbles to the wind," he cried, "so shall I be able to scatter my money broadcast. How easily we shall glide through the world, since we can pave our path with gold."

IV.

A CERTAIN gloom overshadowed the wedding ceremony owing to the bridegroom's bereavement; and the bride looked deadly pale as she left the church on her husband's arm.

"How strangely his countenance had altered!" thought Alys. His eyes glistened with a feverish light, and there was a look on his face that she had never seen before. Half inclined to cry, she made a dash for the carriage, turning to Adrian with a deep-drawn sigh of relief as it whirled them away.

"So it is all over!" she said, toying with her flowers; "the crowd of gaping faces and the solemn service, and we are man and wife."

To her surprise, he did not answer, but gazed before him, wrapt in meditation.

"What are you thinking of, Adrian!"

Still no reply. Alys grew alarmed.

"Are you ill? Why do you not speak to me?"

He looked up, smiling, as though he had only just heard, and, snatching at one of the flowers of her bouquet, pressed it to his lips.

"You shall have beautiful flowers like these every day of your life," he said. "Our money shall flow like water. You see that beggar—I will fling him my gold watch and chain, for it is no more to me than a copper yesterday."

Before she could stop him, he had let down the window, and thrown the trinkets in the street.

"Adrian! Are you mad?" she exclaimed, biting her lips with vexation, as the carriage dashed on, leaving the astonished tramp clasping his prize.

As she left the church on her husband's arm.

A horrible

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Too late—the fatal second had passed, and Adrian lay lifeless below.

dread crept over her, freezing the blood in her veins. She had heard of sudden and unexpected good fortune turning people's brains. What if his uncle's generosity had unsettled Adrian's reason! The thought turned her sick and dizzy, but she had no time to dwell upon it. The door was flung open, and a moment later she had entered her old home.

Alys uttered no word of the suspicion in her heart as loving hands adorned her for the journey. They were bound for a country seat in Wiltshire, lent for the honeymoon.

"I must speak with Doctor Musgrave alone," she said, "before I go."

Julia was her confidante, and carried the message with unusual good humour.

"Have you noticed anything odd about Adrian, Doctor Musgrave?" she asked, as he joined her.

"Yes," he replied reluctantly; "Mr. Arkell seems rather strange."

"I am frightened to death of him," Alys declared. "That money has turned his brain. How shall I dare go away with him?"

"You *must* now," he answered, almost sternly. Then, seeing her terror, added, "Heaven help you, poor child!" and, taking her hand, kissed it reverently. They had no time to linger, for her mother came between them, and escorted the bride downstairs.

Though Doctor Musgrave did not speak to her again, he kept his eye on Adrian with professional keenness, alone knowing her trouble as the carriage whirled away.

The newly-made husband talked wildly on the journey; but not until they found themselves in the old family mansion, with its gardens bathed in the glory of sunset, did the bride's heart sink with the bitterness of desolation. She felt entirely alone in her distress. They were standing together in the library, a room paneled with dusky pictures, old books, and wrinkled tapestry, relics of a former age.

"Come into the boudoir," she said, "this place is so gruesome."

She led the way to a more cheerful apartment, where lounges embroidered in damask roses blended with brocaded chairs and tall flowering plants.

"Do you see that shadow?" he asked suddenly. "It has a death's head, and there are gold coins in its mouth falling out as fast as rain and rolling across the floor." As he spoke he dropped on his knees and groveled at her feet.

"Adrian, if you talk like that I shall send for a doctor."

He did not notice her remark.

"I am going to look for gold in the attics," he continued, with a nod of satisfaction. "I shall not be long, Alys, and you have the shadow to keep you company."

She tried to follow him, but the effort proved fruitless. Helpless and terrified she gave way to her grief, sobbing bitterly in the silent room. As the tears coursed down her cheeks, she fancied she heard the sound of footsteps on the gravel path without. She clasped her hands over her heart to still its beating, and strained every nerve to listen. Her attitude was one of despair as the window leading to the garden opened gently, and Doctor Musgrave walked in. He made no apology for his presence, nor betrayed surprise at Alys' condition. If the circumstances had been of everyday occurrence he could not have appeared more thoroughly at his ease. At first she feared that her eyes deceived her, doubting the balance of her own brain. Then the revulsion of feeling was too great, and, with a cry of joy, she rushed towards him.

"You have come to save me," she whispered eagerly, grasping his hands.

"I foresaw events, and dared not leave you unprotected, so I have strolled about the grounds like a spy ever since your arrival, waiting my time. He is standing now at an upper window, and the look on his face is unmistakable."

"The worst seems over now that you are here," she murmured.

"Poor girl!" he thought, "you do not realise your life-long misery has only just begun."

"Listen! Adrian is calling."

"Alys! Alys!" His voice resounded through the house.

"Let us go to him," said the doctor gravely. "He must not be left for a moment."

Adrian beckoned them as they appeared on the upper storey.

"Come out upon the leads," he cried, "and examine the treasure; you will see it better there. I have found a wonderful ladder of solid gold, with rungs inlaid with precious stones."

Alys shrank back, and covered her face with her hands.

"There is no such thing, Adrian," she cried. "Do you wish to kill me?"

He shook his head.

"I will prove the truth of my words," he shouted, dashing through the window. "See!—it is there—strong and firm. I will descend to the garden below."

For the moment Alys remained rooted to the spot. She felt her own senses deserting her, though she took in the situation at a glance. Adrian was hanging over the balcony, unknowingly courting his death, while Doctor Musgrave rushed forward to catch him. Too late—the fatal second had passed, and Adrian lay lifeless below. Above stood the man who would have saved him, tenderly clasping the fainting form of the woman he loved.

THE FRESH-AIR FUND.

In order to get ahead with the necessary arrangements, I think it is quite time to begin asking once more for subscriptions to the Fresh-Air Fund. The programme that I have decided upon for the coming summer will be carried out upon precisely the same lines which proved in every way so satisfactory last year. That is to say, I shall aim at taking a definite number of children for a country holiday from London and every provincial centre with a population of over 200,000. If the money still continues to come in towards the end of the summer, as I expect it will, the balance is to be spent on the metropolis. There is no limit to the number of little children thirsting for a breath of fresh air, for one day's freedom from the dust and heat and pestilence of the slums.

Ninepence is sufficient to pay for each little one's outing, including the double railway or tram fare and two substantial meals of large meat pies, and cake, and milk, and bread, and jam, and butter.

Subscriptions, however small, will be gratefully acknowledged by the editor of Short Stories, Pearson's Weekly Buildings, Henrietta-street, Covent Garden, London. Collecting forms may also be had by application at the office.

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AN IMPORTANT LETTER.

JOHN FORMBY, of the firm of Formby and Wilton, was walking down Piccadilly on his way to see a colleague in Chancery Lane. He was a decidedly striking-looking man, and not at all like the usual type of a respectable family solicitor. He was considerably above the average height, and very dark. His forehead and nose were quite of the statuesque order; the rest of his face was hidden by a black, bushy beard. He was about forty years of age, and unmarried.

This morning the traffic seemed greater than usual, and blocks occurred every two or three minutes. John Formby noticed a private brougham, which drew up at the pavement close to where he was standing. It had scarcely stopped when the window was opened quickly, and a young girl leaned out, and thrust a letter into Formby's hand, exclaiming as she did so, "For God's sake, post this."

John Formby took it. A few strides led to the pillar box, and he dropped the letter in, just as a burly, coarse-looking young man hurried up as though to intercept him. This individual looked hard at Formby, who surveyed him coolly from head to foot, and then, with a muttered execration, went back and jumped into the brougham, which presently moved off.

Prompted by an influence he did not stop to analyse, Formby jumped into a hansom, and with a brief direction to the driver to follow the brougham he whirled after them down the Haymarket, and along the Strand and Fleet Street, into the heart of the City.

On and on they drove, until it began to occur to Formby that a hansom was rather an unusual object in this neighbourhood, and that he was beginning to be observed by the passers-by. Just as he had realised this, the cabman attracted his attention, and remarked, "I don't know whether you have noticed it, sir, but the party in front has looked back at us twice."

John had not noticed it. He stopped the cab at once and took a hasty glance round. A baker's covered cart had stopped a few yards in front of them. In an instant his mind was made up. He paid and dismissed the cab, and went up to the driver of the covered cart. "Did you see that brougham pass just now?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," the man replied, looking at him in some surprise.

"Just drive me after it," said John, springing into the cart. "Follow wherever it goes, and I will make it worth your while," he added.

For some minutes they rattled after the brougham, which finally drew up before a dingy looking house in the street, and John saw a woman come out and aid in assisting the man he had seen at the pillar-box to half drag, half carry a young girl into the house.

"Well, that's a rum go," observed the driver of the baker's cart.

"Do you know who lives there?" demanded John.

"Yes," replied the man; "a very respectable party. I leave bread there every evening."

"Will you try and find out for me who that young lady is, and where she comes from?" pursued John eagerly.

"Well, I'll try, sir. But how am I to let you know?"

"Where is your shop?"

"Oh, a long way back."

"I will be there at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning. Can you drive me there now?"

The man assented, and they returned the way they had come, and finally stopped before a small baker's shop. John gave the man a sovereign, much to his amazement, and walked off, hoping to find a cab a little farther on. He was very late for his appointment, a circumstance which very much surprised his friend, who had never known John Formby unpunctual before.

At about four o'clock he got back to his office, where he found a letter awaiting him, the contents of which were as follows:—

"Gentlemen,—My father died last night. Will you come down at once? My step-brother is here, and is causing me much annoyance.

"Yours faithfully,

"MARION HARRINGTON.

"Messrs. Formby and Wilton."

John Formby laid the letter down and reflected for a moment. Major Harrington had been a client of his for about four years. He was a widower with two children, one a son by his first wife, the other a daughter by his second wife.

A short time ago his son had offended him, and he came up to London and made a most extraordinary will, in which he left everything to his daughter, with the provision that she should allow her brother not less than three hundred a year. He had informed his solicitor that he had told his son that he intended doing this, and that he need expect nothing more from him.

John took up the letter and read it through once more. Then he glanced at the envelope, and saw to his surprise that it had been posted in London that day, although the letter was dated the day before.

He went into his partner's room, and consulted him.

"I should go down at once," advised Mr. Wilton, after perusing the letter. "You can just catch a train which will land you there in a couple of hours."

Accordingly, John set out, and reached his destination about half-past eight. He asked for Miss Harrington, and was informed that she had gone away that morning.

"But her father is just dead," exclaimed John in surprise.

"Yes, sir," returned the maid, tearfully. "He is lying dead upstairs now; and oh, sir! I am sure Miss Marion would never have gone away like this of her own accord."

"Just tell me all you know about it," said John. "I am the late Major Harrington's solicitor, Mr. John Formby."

Thus encouraged, the maid proceeded. Briefly, her story was as follows: Major Harrington had been taken very suddenly ill, and died within a few hours. His son was telegraphed for, but arrived too late to see him alive. He had a long interview with his sister, who came out of the room crying, and told her maid that her brother had been very violent, and that she was afraid to be left alone with him.

The next morning she ordered her carriage, saying she was going up to London to see her solicitor, and would return the same evening. "That was yesterday, sir," continued the maid, "and she has not come back, nor Mr. James Harrington either."

"Did he go with her?"

"No, sir; but we think that he must have followed her."

John was silent for a few moments. Then a sudden inspiration flashed across him. "What was Mr. Harrington like?" he inquired. "Have you a portrait of him or of Miss Harrington?"

"Oh, yes, sir," answered the maid, "I will get them for you."

She went out of the room, and returned a moment afterwards with two photographs, in which John instantly recognised the lady who had asked him to post the letter, and the man who was with her in the brougham.

"It is all right," he said to the maid; "I know where they are."

He hurried back to the railway station, only to find that the last train had departed. He spent the night at the hotel close by, and started off by the first train the following morning. He went straight to his office, and after taking council with his partner, they proceeded together to the baker's shop. Here John found his friend of the day before, who informed him that he had found out all about the young lady.

"The poor young thing is out of her mind," he said, "and her brother has brought her up here to hide her from those who wish to put her away in an asylum. He brought her up from the country the day before yesterday."

John and his partner waited to hear no more, but proceeded to

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the house without delay. The door was opened by a woman who looked at them suspiciously, and inquired their business.

"We wish to see Miss Harrington, the young lady who is in your house now," said John sternly.

"There is no such person here," replied the woman.

"You are telling me a lie," returned John. "Miss Harrington was brought here yesterday by her brother, who has tried to pass her off as a lunatic. We are her solicitors, Messrs. Formby and Wilton."

The woman hesitated.

"My orders were to let no one see her," she said doubtfully.

"You will get yourself into serious trouble if you try and prevent our seeing Miss Harrington," observed Mr. Wilton.

"The gentleman is out," said the woman, "and he has left the lady locked up in her room."

The next instant John Formby strode past her, and went upstairs, the woman following, and protesting strongly against this invasion.

He opened the doors of two of the rooms easily, but the third one was locked. The key, however, had not been removed, and John turned it, and then knocked.

"Come in," said a voice, and he entered.

Marion Harrington was standing near the window. She glanced at John with a look of alarm, which quickly turned to one of half-puzzled recognition.

"You are the gentleman who posted my letter," she said.

"Yes," answered John, "and, oddly enough, it was addressed to myself. If I had only looked at the envelope then, I might have spared you this disagreeable experience. I am Mr. Formby, and my partner is waiting below. We have a cab and, with your permission, will take you home at once, and deal with your brother afterwards."

On the way back, Marion related her adventures.

It seemed that her step-brother had tried to make her sign a deed of gift, investing him with half her property. On her refusal to do this until she had consulted her solicitor, he became very violent, and gave utterance to various threats. She then wrote the letter to Messrs. Formby and Wilton, but reflected after she had done so, that under the circumstances it would be better to go in person to see them.

Accordingly she started, intending to get them to come back with her by the next train, if possible; but at the London terminus, she was seized by her step-brother, and forced into a cab. He took her to an hotel, and announced that she was a lunatic, feigning great distress at her condition.

The next morning he engaged a private carriage and removed her. Fortunately she had the letter in her pocket, and when the block in Piccadilly arrested the progress of the brougham, she noticed John, and a sudden impulse prompted her to snatch the letter from her pocket, and ask him to post it, the result of which was, as we have seen, her ultimate deliverance.

The heiress of Mascot Hall made what her friends called a very bad match, for she married her solicitor, Mr. John Formby, about six months after the events just related. But, as she described herself in a letter to a friend, written some years afterwards, "the happiest woman that ever lived," we may assume that, as far as she was concerned, the union was a thoroughly satisfactory one.

The Two Fausts.

FROM THE ITALIAN.

CHAPTER I.

"GOOD evening, Giacomo; what is the matter?" The other sat down moodily on a chair and did not answer, but gazed with frowning brow on the floor. His friend did not disturb him, but went on calmly with his evening meal. At length Giacomo roused himself.

"Matter enough," he said, despondently, "I've just seen Valeria."

"Well," said his friend, "I shouldn't look so despairingly sad if *I* had seen her," and then relapsed into silence.

"You are a fool, Petruccio; I warrant you would be downcast if you were in my place. Why! she laughed at me!" he exclaimed, angrily, stamping his foot on the ground, and blushing at the remembrance. "She actually burst out laughing when I told her that I loved her as nobody ever did, or will. Sapristi! You are laughing too! It's too bad! I shall not be in a hurry again to confide in you, Petruccio."

"Tell me all about it," replied his friend, soothingly, and becoming grave again. "What made you tell her of your—love? No, no; I don't mean to laugh, upon my faith I don't!"

"She was singing her parts for her *début* in *Faust*, you know. Ah, what a voice. I went mad, and fell on my knees before her, and asked her to do what she liked with me—only to let me tell her that I adored her!"

"And——?"

"And she stopped in the middle of a high C to laugh at me! I implored, but she only laughed the louder. Such a musical laugh! But it felt like a hot iron on my heart. I got up and almost wept as I asked her just for a flower from her hand. But she would not give even that. It was too cruel, Petruccio!"

"What did you do?"

"Oh, I got angry."

"And told her that you would have your revenge. Was not that the way of it?"

"It was. I said that some day she would not refuse me a flower when I asked it—or my hand either, when I offered it."

"Yes; I thought that would be what must follow—the usual way. And how are you going to get her to your feet now, Giacomo *mio*?"

The other did not answer, but looked at his friend with an assured air, as if he had no apprehensions on that score. Then he changed the subject, and picked up a guitar from a chair beside him.

"You haven't been playing lately, Petro, have you?" he asked, using the familiar nickname for his friend.

"No. I have been devoting all my time to singing with the maestro, who says I may come out in two years or so. He can get me any part, but my favourite is Faust. I must get him to give me a primo in that."

"You may sing with Valeria."

"True; I look forward to that, I must say. Don't be jealous, you know. Somebody must be *primo tenore* in it, and surely you would prefer me to some greasy little man of forty to make love to Valeria. I can put in a good word for you while I seem to be wooing and winning her," he finished, with a twinkle in his eyes.

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"As you please," Giacomo answered, indifferently. "I must be going now, my friend. I am sorry to have interrupted you in your dinner. Thanks, no; I cannot join you in it to-night; I have another engagement. Good luck to you with Valeria. Good night."

Giacomo threaded his way out of his friend's apartments, and, wrapping his cloak around him, took his homeward road.

CHAPTER II.

ALL Florence was excited. The Italians are proverbially a nation of quick and changeful moods, and this mood was having full sway. It was no new opera, *Faust;* but then there was not always such a Marguerita as Valeria di Karro. Besides, she was a Florentine herself, and after earning the praise of all Europe, she was coming back to Florence to sing in her native city, and to charm her fellow-citizens as she had charmed the world. She was talked of in the streets, in the shops, in the palazzos. Her voice was discussed, pulled to pieces, put together again, and pronounced the finest in the world. Her dramatic talent was as great as her talent for singing, and she was *so* lovely! Even in her own sex she had unqualified worshippers.

It was more than four years since she had made her *début* in Florence, and she had simply taken her audience by storm from that hour. She had been constantly travelling from one capital to another, leaving glory and enthusiastic newspaper critiques in her track.

So that her reappearance in Florence was eagerly looked forward to, none the less so that the part of *Faust* was to be taken by their idol, who had first sung to them two seasons ago, and whose voice was familiar to every theatre-lover in Florence, namely, the young Petruccio Lalli.

He was congratulated in public, envied in private, and talked of in both. He was known to be devoting all his energies towards preparing himself for the momentous occasion. He was scarcely ever seen in the streets now; but a few strollers would occasionally group beneath some window, from whence they could hear the delicious, though faint notes, of the great tenor. Of course he still sang in the opera, but evidently he was reserving his powers for the supreme effort.

The day wore on, and at length the divine Valeria was seen in the streets of Florence, looking pleased and happy. Early on the night of the performance crowds assembled before the doors of the theatre eager to get a good seat at all costs.

On that same morning Valeria was visited by Petruccio, who was enchanted at the opportunity which he at last had got, and for which he had worked so desperately hard for the last few weeks, perfecting every note and fixing every aria in his mind to his own satisfaction. The cantatrice greeted him warmly.

"Ah, my friend!" she said, cordially, when he entered, "it is such a time since we have seen each other. I have heard of your success—who has not heard of it in all Italy?—and I assure you I was delighted when I read of it; and I am so glad that you are to sing with me to-night—it will be quite like old times, when we used to practise our solfeggios together, and bring down the maestro's wrath on our devoted heads at not opening our mouths enough."

They both laughed at the remembrance.

"The maestro couldn't laugh at you now, Valeria, could he? Those days are past."

"Nor at you. By the way, my friend, how is little Giacomo? He will be a man now."

Petruccio shook his head.

"He is not as he used to be. We seldom see each other now, and when we do, he is taciturn. I don't know what he is doing."

"Strange," answered Valeria, in a tone which meant that she didn't want to trouble over the matter.

After some light refreshment, Petruccio retired, after wishing Valeria all success.

From the opening of the doors of the theatre that night, till the rising of the curtain, there was a perpetual buzz of conversation and of excited whispers. The house filled to overflowing, and fashion and beauty were no less represented than the crowds of the middle and lower classes.

Behind the curtain the excitement was tremendous, though not so loudly expressed. Despair was visible on every countenance, and poor Valeria was as white as a sheet.

A message from Petruccio, almost illegibly scrawled, had told her that he had been struck down with a violent fit of sickness, which had utterly prostrated him! He had tried, he wrote, to prepare and pull himself together for the trial; but it was of no use. He felt ill in mind and in body, and would have preferred to die rather than live the wretched wreck that he found himself Giacomo had visited him that morning, and was *so* kind. He prayed Valeria to forgive him and to pity him, and besought her to try to get another Faust—he did not know anyone else to take the part though.

The consternation of the artistes at this letter could be imagined. Even now the angry calls of the audience told them that they were already behind time, and were being impatiently waited for.

The house wondered at the delay.

The calling ceased, and anxious whispers took the place of angry murmurs.

Could anything have happened? the people asked each other—could Valeria have fallen ill? Why didn't the manager tell them, then? It might be fire!

Loud voices were heard behind the scenes, and then a silence, and the curtain ran up. The house gave a sigh of satisfaction. All was well, then, and they would hear Valeria.

The first few notes of the opera was listened to with profound attention and silence, then a sensation ran through the house, and voices began here and there, the men looked at each other, and the women put their heads together and spoke.

It was *not* the voice of their idol, Petruccio, and the jealousy of the house at his place being taken by anyone else, expressed itself by angry mutterings and gestures. But these were soon hushed as the conviction forced itself upon them, that Petruccio's voice was but as nothing compared to that of the man before them. Full, rich, and glorious the notes fell from his lips, till the whole building seemed to be blendings of delicious harmonies. A dead silence of expectation reigned as the sage was about to appear as the young Faust.

He came. And the stillness of the house was broken by a short cry, and a name indistinctly pronounced. A woman fainted, and was carried from the theatre. Between the acts the excitement was tremendous. The face was familiar to all of them, and he was a Florentine. Yet who he might be they knew not. One woman could tell, but she was gone, in a faint; so they had to content themselves with speculation.

As the opera went on the excitement increased. Even Valeria herself proved a secondary attraction, though she seemed absolutely inspired, and played and sang as no one present had ever seen or heard before. She seemed almost frenzied, while Faust himself sang with passion rivalling hers.

His high notes were clear and full as those of an instrument, and his low notes rolled forth in perfect splendour. The audience was entranced, stupefied, and when the curtain came down for the last time, the thunders of applause continued for recall after recall.

Valeria retired to her room in the greatest agitation and exhaustion.

At last a step approached her door. She sat up in a tremor of agitation. "Would it pass?" she thought with a pang. No; it paused at her door, and a gentle tap asked admittance. It was granted; the door opened, and Giacomo entered, still in his costume of Faust. His face was pale, but firm.

"Can you refuse me just a little flower, now, Valeria?" he said, pleadingly, kneeling by her side.

She took one of the splendid bouquets which she had received that night, and tearing off a flower, pressed it to her lips and handed it with a trembling arm to Giacomo.

He stood up smiling, and, looking with a kind of bitter amusement at her face to mark the expression, began slowly to tear off the petals of the flower one by one, scattering them about the room. Then he lightly threw the broken and stripped stalk into her lap, again bowed, still smiling, and left the room.

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THE TENTH OF JUNE.

By John K. Leys, *Author of "In the Toils," "My Hindoo Friend," &c., &c.*

Illustrated by Raymond Potter.

SUMMARY.

Geoffrey Dundas, whose life is attempted on the 10th June, 1883, by a Hindoo barrister at the Law Courts, by means of poison, visits General Sir Arthur Chetwynd at Seacombe Towers, in May, 1884. The General explains that a serious danger threatens the household, and that it will come, if at all, on the tenth of June. The reason for this is that in India on this particular day, in 1853, Sir Arthur, together with Geoffrey's father (since dead) took part in the looting of a Hindoo temple, and every tenth of June afterwards one of the Englishmen concerned, or some member of their families, is assassinated. On the last day of May, Amavati, the Rajah of Nagore, visits Sir Arthur, who subsequently refuses His Highness's request for his only daughter Leila's hand in marriage, but gives him permission to repeat his proposal in a year's time. Geoffrey tells Amavati of the danger which threatens himself and the General's household.

CHAPTER VI.

Geoffrey takes Counsel.

By half-past five Geoffrey was up, and dressed.

In the quiet morning hours he had thought over the matter again, and had resolved to say nothing to Sir Arthur of his conversation with the Rajah. It could only add to the General's alarm to let him know that the Rajah believed that the danger that threatened them was imminent; and obviously he could hardly consult the General as to whether he should take the Rajah's advice and leave the country for a few days; or remain at Seacombe Towers over the Tenth of June.

But he felt it to be a necessity that he should take counsel with some one. His natural instinct prompted him to remain with his friends. The idea of quitting the General's roof while the shadow of danger still hung over him was intolerable. But, on the other hand, he feared that his presence might be a source of peril rather than a safeguard. If he were to leave the place he might divert the attention of the invisible enemy.

Often, when one is in perplexity, one feels an irrepressible longing to open one's mind to a friend; not so much in the hope of getting new light on the subject, as from a natural impulse to seek companionship and sympathy. So Geoffrey had resolved, as he lay awake during the night, that he would at once go up to London, and talk over the whole matter with his friend Linton. He knew that Jack Linton had for him a more than ordinary friendship, and that he possessed that invaluable quality in an adviser—a stable, well-balanced mind, not likely to be led astray by fancies or prejudices.

Of course, before going, it would be necessary to see the General and make some excuse for his sudden visit to town; but he thought it better not to say anything of the object of his journey.

Knowing that Sir Arthur was an early riser, Geoffrey went, shortly before six, to his dressing-room door, and tapped lightly.

"Come in!"

Geoffrey went in, and found the General finishing his toilet.

"I beg your pardon, sir, for disturbing you," he said; "but I want to take a run up to town this morning, and I have just time to catch the early train. May I tell Davis to let me have the light dog-cart?"

"You had better take the mail-phaeton. But why this sudden start? You are not leaving us for good?"

"Oh, dear, no! I merely want to see a man on business. It is rather important; but I expect to be back to-morrow, perhaps, even by the late train, to-night. You will make my excuses to Miss Chetwynd?"

"Oh, yes. Don't stand on ceremony."

"Good-bye, then, for the present."

Geoffrey was in the act of leaving the room, when a sudden thought occurred to him. He closed the door, and went back.

"General," he said, "will you forgive me if I ask a very personal question, one which, under other circumstances, would be impertinent?"

The General nodded and smiled.

"It is this: Don't you think that, in view of the danger that menaces us, it would be as well to have everything in readiness for—for the worst?"

"In what way?"

"For example—pardon my asking you—have you made your will?"

Sir Arthur frowned, threw himself into a chair, stretched out his legs, and thrust his hands deep into his pockets. The subject was to him a very unpleasant one. He had a strong opinion that to leave a large fortune to a young girl whose future was uncertain was to do her a very questionable kindness. It was simply making her a target at which adventurers might aim their arrows. How could he feel sure that some unworthy fellow might not succeed in winning her heart after he himself had passed over to the majority?

He would infinitely have preferred to settle his property upon Leila by way of a marriage settlement, hard as it would be to part from his child; and a year before it would have given him great satisfaction to have seen Captain Byngham come forward and declare himself to be Leila's lover. But now he was not so sure. He had not much liked several things in the Captain's talk, and in his manner, during the present visit.

Found the General finishing his toilet

Unconsciously he had been comparing the Captain with Geoffrey, and Geoffrey had been appearing to great advantage by the side of the selfish, arrogant Byngham; he liked Geoffrey ten times better; but then, Captain Byngham was his own relative, and the idea of a marriage between him and Leila had been in the General's mind ever since Leila was ten years old. So he was by no means prepared to throw Byngham over. And yet he hesitated.

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"If you have not made your will," said Geoffrey, "let me urge you to make it at once. You can revoke it at any time, you know."

"I have not made my will," answered the General; "and the worst of it is, I don't know how to make it. But you are quite right. I'll take a run into Plymouth, and see my old friend, Quinton, the solicitor. I'll take his advice about it."

"Why not come with me now as far as Plymouth? To be sure, you will arrive rather early, but——"

"On the contrary, I shall just be in time for breakfast at the 'Duke of Cornwall,'" cried the General, starting to his feet. "Run and order the phaeton. I'll be with you in five minutes."

In less than ten minutes the two travellers were on their way to the railway station. At Plymouth they parted, the General going to the hotel, while Geoffrey, too anxious in mind to care for any breakfast beyond a cup of coffee, pursued his journey to London.

He reached town while the afternoon was yet young; and as he had telegraphed to his friend from Exeter, he was hardly surprised, though he was very much pleased, to see Jack Linton's face peering into the carriage as the train glided alongside the platform at Paddington.

"This is awfully good of you!" he cried, as he jumped out of the carriage and grasped his friend's hand.

"Oh, not at all. I got your telegram; so, as I had nothing particular to do, I thought it might save time if I came on here."

"You have done me a real favour. Now, instead of spending time running half over London, we can go to the hotel and have lunch. I can tell you what I've come up to see you about, and after having a comfortable rest I shall be in time to catch the five o'clock express back."

"You're not going back to Devonshire to-night, Geff?"

"Yes, I am. But come along. I've no luggage."

A cold bath, a good meal, and Jack Linton's society made such a difference in Geoffrey's inner and outer man that he was half inclined to think that he had given himself a good deal of unnecessary trouble in coming so far to consult his friend. The danger to be apprehended did not now seem half so great as it had appeared to be the night before. However, he felt it would be a comfort to talk the thing over.

Throwing himself on a couch by an open window, he took out his cigar case, invited Linton to select one, and then lit one himself.

"Do you remember," he asked, "how I was nearly poisoned—as I supposed—about this time last year?"

Linton stopped in the act of striking a vesta, and looked at his friend curiously.

"I remember it very well," he returned. "You don't mean to say that you have reason to dread another attack of the same kind?"

"Not exactly. But listen."

Geoffrey then went on to tell his friend the whole story, everything that he himself knew, including all that the General had told him, and his conversation with the Rajah. He did not even conceal the fact that he was in love with Leila, in order that his friend might understand that her safety must be the paramount consideration. And he also told him that Captain Byngham, as well as the Rajah, was his rival.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Linton, when the narrative came to an end, "it is difficult to believe that such things as you dread could take place in England at the end of the nineteenth century!"

"You forget that we have to deal with Orientals," said Geoffrey. "Centuries count for little in India."

"True."

"And since I have no evidence against any one—no proof even, that we are in danger, except the anonymous letter—if you can call that proof—I cannot apply to the police."

"No; and they could be of no use if you did apply to them. You can't arrest a man simply because he is a Hindoo, even if a Hindoo did try to murder you twelve months ago. Besides, you say you believe this Rajah to be friendly?"

"I believe so."

"I wonder what he wanted with that letter?" said Linton meditatively. "He can't have touched it up with some chemical, which would destroy the writing in time? Have you it with you?"

"Here it is," said Geoffrey, taking the letter from his pocket.

"It seems all right," said Linton, after closely inspecting the writing. "Besides, I don't see how it could help the conspirators to destroy it, now that you know its contents. No doubt they are very sorry it ever was sent. The writing of it was quite 'too previous,' as the Yankees say."

The train glided alongside the platform.

"It would have come in pretty effectively if I had been lying dead in my chambers, as they naturally thought I was," observed Geoffrey. "But the main point is this—ought I to take the Rajah's advice, and clear out of the country while there is time, or stay with the General and his daughter. Of course I would rather stay with them; but I confess I felt inclined to trust the Rajah, and he seemed to know what he was saying; and then, I thought that perhaps my going away might cause a diversion in the General's favour. They can hardly intend attacking us all this year, unless we are all together under one roof."

Linton took one or two turns up and down the room before replying.

"No," he said at length. "I advise you to follow your natural instinct, and stay at Seacombe Towers—isn't that the name of the house?—till the Tenth of June has gone by. *If* the Rajah is to be trusted, your staying won't make it any more dangerous for your friends. If he is *not* to be trusted, obviously his advice is not to be taken.

"Besides, it seems to me that the General, rather than you, is the man in peril—supposing always that they know him to be one of those who destroyed their temple and killed their priests, and that danger is to be apprehended from the Rajah. It was for *his* sake, certainly, not for yours, that the Rajah went to Seacombe Towers. His visit had been planned before you were so much as invited to stay at the house this summer. No; if I were in your place I should remain in the General's house till the Tenth of June is over."

"Good!" cried Geoffrey, springing to his feet, and throwing the stump of his cigar out of the window. "That's what I should like to do. But it has been a great comfort to me to talk the thing over with you. I'm awfully obliged to you. How long shall you be in town?"

"Till the beginning of August, at all events."

"Then I shall look you up as soon as I get back from Devonshire."

Soon after this the two friends parted, and Geoffrey set out on his return journey.

It was midnight before he reached Plymouth, and there were no local trains that night; but the traveller did not feel inclined to go to a hotel. He had been asleep the greater part of the time since he left London, and felt he should enjoy a long walk in the cool night air. The distance to Seacombe Towers was about fifteen miles, and, by taking a cab for the first four or five miles, he could make sure of reaching his destination in time to finish the night in bed.

To be sure, there was the difficulty that he would have to rouse someone in order to get into the house. But Geoffrey knew that one of the grooms slept in a small room over an out-

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house in the rear of the house, and that there was a communication between his bedroom and the interior of the main building; so he felt sure that by awaking the groom he could gain admittance without disturbing anyone else.

The night was fine, and there was a full moon, so Geoffrey found his ten-mile walk delightful. When at last he entered the General's grounds it was broad daylight. By dint of throwing pebbles at the groom's bedroom window, he managed to wake the lad; and in a few minutes he found himself inside the house.

He was passing along one of the corridors on the first floor, his footsteps being quite inaudible on the thick carpeting, when he distinctly saw a shadow flit across the stairs which led to the second floor. Someone, he understood, must have passed before the window which lighted the staircase, or some window above.

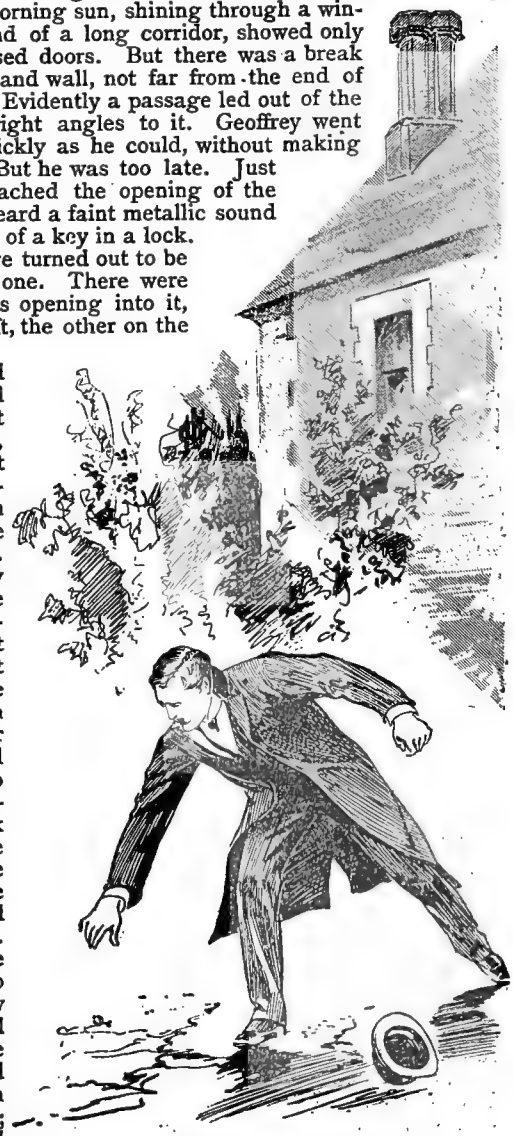
Geoffrey's first thought was that burglars must be in the house. But the idea had barely entered his mind when he saw that it was absurd. He had seen no sign that anything was wrong when he approached the house; and no burglar would be likely to seek the upper floors, where there must be little worth stealing.

With rapid, noiseless steps Geoffrey sped up the stairs.

No one was in sight when he reached the upper landing. The bright morning sun, shining through a window at the end of a long corridor, showed only a row of closed doors. But there was a break in the right-hand wall, not far from the end of the gallery. Evidently a passage led out of the corridor at right angles to it. Geoffrey went along, as quickly as he could, without making any noise. But he was too late. Just before he reached the opening of the passage he heard a faint metallic sound—the turning of a key in a lock.

The passage turned out to be quite a short one. There were only two doors opening into it, one on the left, the other on the right.

Geoffrey had half a mind to knock at these doors, and insist upon the persons within giving some explanation. But clearly this would be an absurd proceeding. It would not take more than ten seconds for the nocturnal wanderer to get into bed—not to speak of the time that might be gained before the door could be opened. Besides, there were two doors. How could he tell which was the one which had just been closed. No; nothing could be gained by making a disturbance at present. But the young man determined that he would be awake and watching at the same hour on the following morning.



By dint of throwing pebbles.

He did not feel quite certain whether he should mention this little incident to the General. It was suspicious, certainly, yet capable of a perfectly innocent explanation. One of the servants, for example, might have been awake, and hearing the noise made by admitting Geoffrey, might have gone downstairs to see what was the matter, and then gone quietly back to bed. On the whole, Geoffrey came to the conclusion that it would be better to say nothing to the General, but content himself with keeping a good look-out next morning.

He met one of the housemaids.

He went to bed, and in three minutes he was fast asleep.

Tired out with his long journey and his walk, Geoffrey slept till late. He was on his way down to breakfast when he met one of the housemaids coming down from the second floor.

"Just come upstairs for a moment," he said to her. "I want to ask you a question about one of the rooms."

Leading her to the end of the short passage which opened out of the corridor, he pointed to the door on the right, and asked:

"Can you tell me whose room that is?"

"That's a lumber-room, sir," answered the girl with a look of surprise. He went on a few steps, and opened the door. The room was quite empty, but for some empty boxes and disused furniture.

He next pointed to the door on the left.

"And do you know who sleeps there?"

"It's one of the Indian gentlemen."

"You don't mean the Rajah?"

"Oh, no, sir; it's the one they call Mr. Sen."

CHAPTER VII.

SIR ARTHUR VISITS HIS LAWYER.

MR. SILAS QUINTON, Sir Arthur Chetwynd's solicitor, might have been taken for the head of a large and prosperous retail business, for an auctioneer or a horse-doctor, or a minister of an unusually cheerful type—for anything rather than a lawyer. His little, sunburnt, beardless face was perpetually wreathed in smiles.

He wore a suit of rather shabby black clothes, an old-fashioned stuck-up collar, and an enormous gold watch secured by an antique watch-ribbon. His hat was always inclined towards the back of his head, sometimes towards the left as well. He was fond of standing with his small legs pretty far apart, his hands under his coat-tails, and his head stuck on one side.

But with all his oddity, and with all his simplicity of character, Silas Quinton was a first-rate man of business, and an excellent lawyer. Some few men were able to boast that they had got the better of Mr. Quinton in a business transaction; but no man was ever heard to say that he had circumvented him twice.

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As the General was aware, Mr. Quinton kept early hours. Soon after nine he called at the office; and he had not to wait long before the solicitor made his appearance.

"You are very early in town, Sir Arthur," said he, as he shook hands. "Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Nothing whatever. Only, I have been reminded that I have never yet made my will; and I have decided to get it done at once."

"Quite right, my dear sir. Better attend to all those things while we are in full health, and have plenty of time to attend to it."

"I don't know that I *have* much time, Mr. Quinton. I have a particular reason for wishing to get the thing done to-day, or to-morrow at latest."

"I daresay it can be managed," said Mr. Quinton, as he took a sheet of foolscap from a drawer, and made a memorandum in one corner of it.

"My chief difficulty," said Sir Arthur Chetwynd, slowly, "is that, having no sons, my daughter must be my heiress; and yet I have made up my mind not to leave the bulk of my property to her by will. That means, in all probability, adopting some man whom I have never seen as my heir. My idea is to provide a small annuity to my daughter in any event, and to leave the bulk of what I have to her, on condition that she marries a man of my choosing or remains unmarried. Can that be managed?"

"In an indirect way it can. But, my dear General, suppose your daughter were to meet with a perfectly eligible suitor some time after your death?"

"Then I should wish her to have a moderate income—say five hundred a year. Don't begin protesting, my dear sir, my mind is quite made up. If the eligible suitor who turns up after I am gone is a rich man he won't want money with his wife. If he is a poor man, he will think five hundred a year a very fair dowry."

"Perhaps. But Miss Chetwynd? Won't it be rather hard upon her?"

"If she does not think the eligible suitor worth the sacrifice she needn't have him," said the General.

It was plain to Mr. Quinton that the old campaigner was absurdly jealous of this supposed husband who was to step into his shoes some day.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said he after a pause. "I'll authorise my trustees to pay my daughter a yearly sum equal to any independent income her husband may possess beyond five hundred a year. If she marries a man of substance she will keep the bulk of her income; if she marries a poor man she will have a small but sufficient income. In either case there will be no great temptation for fortune-hunters."

Mr Silas Quinton.

"Unto him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance," was the quotation that occurred to the lawyer, but he did not utter it.

"And the bulk of the property — in case your daughter marries a poor man or dies without issue?"

"I should like it to be spent in building and endowing schools for the sons and daughters of officers in the army," said the General, after a pause.

The lawyer answered by a bow. He was busy jotting down the General's instructions, and there was silence in the room for some minutes.

"I suppose," said Sir Arthur carelessly, "if I write to any one who may ask for my daughter's hand, and give my consent to the marriage, that would be sufficient to secure to them the whole of my property?"

"Yes, it would. But, to prevent misunderstandings, it may be as well to give notice of your approval to the trustees. By the way, who are to be the trustees?"

Bumpus.

"Yourself, for one, if you will accept the trust. I couldn't have a better man."

Mr. Quinton bowed gravely, but with a very pleased look in his eyes.

"For the others, Lieutenant Stoddart, of the Royal Navy; and my neighbour, Lord Lavington. I got his consent in joke one evening after dinner; but, by Jove, I'll keep him to his bargain."

"This will be an awkward will to draw," said Mr. Quinton, regarding his sheet of instructions with his head very much on one side, and a look of dissatisfaction on his jolly face. "However, I daresay Mr. Bumpus will be able to put it into shape for us."

"Who's he?"

"Bumpus? He's a clever conveyancing counsel, who does most of my London agent's work."

"Then you mean to send that will to London?"

"Certainly."

"And how long will that take—I mean, how long will it be before it can be ready for signature?"

"Oh, ten days; perhaps a fortnight."

"But that won't do at all, Quinton," said the General earnestly. "I have a particular reason for having my will made in the course of to-morrow, or next day at farthest. I would prefer that it should be to-morrow."

"But it's impossible. Who's to draw it?"

"Draw it yourself."

Mr. Quinton shook his head.

"I've drawn plenty of wills," he said, "but in a case of this importance—— However, I will draw it myself in the meantime. You can sign it, and then it can be submitted to counsel; and if he doesn't think it carries out your wishes beyond the possibility of a doubt, he can draw it over again."

"Very good. Please yourself about that. Only I want to sign the thing to-morrow."

"It would be easier," said the lawyer in a jocular tone, still looking at the memoranda before him, "to deal with the matter by way of marriage settlement; but I suppose that is impossible?"

The General fidgeted in his chair.

"The fact is," said he, "I delayed making a will partly for that very reason. I would prefer greatly that my daughter should be married before my death; but my cousin——"

He stopped himself.

Mr. Quinton looked at him curiously; but the General said no more.

The solicitor considered for a moment, and then put the question he had in his mind:

"As I am to be one of your daughter's trustees, Sir Arthur, I confess I should like to know whether these elaborate pre-

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cautions have any special aim? In a word—is there any person whom you object to Miss Chetwynd marrying?"

"No," answered the General, pulling his moustache thoughtfully; "I can't say that there is. I had long thought my cousin, Captain Byngham, and she might make a match of it——"

"Captain Byngham!"

"Yes. Why not?"

"I am glad I spoke; otherwise I might have misunderstood you altogether. The fact is, I was under the impression that you particularly wished to forbid or prevent, as far as was in your power, your daughter from marrying Captain Byngham. Or, at least, that you wished to prevent his getting any considerable fortune if he succeeded in persuading Miss Chetwynd to have him."

"That was not in my mind. But what made you imagine such a thing? Do you know Captain Byngham?"

"No; I do not. But the provisions of your will seemed aimed at someone who might wish to marry your daughter for her money. You know, I suppose, that your cousin will have to part with his estate in Yorkshire?"

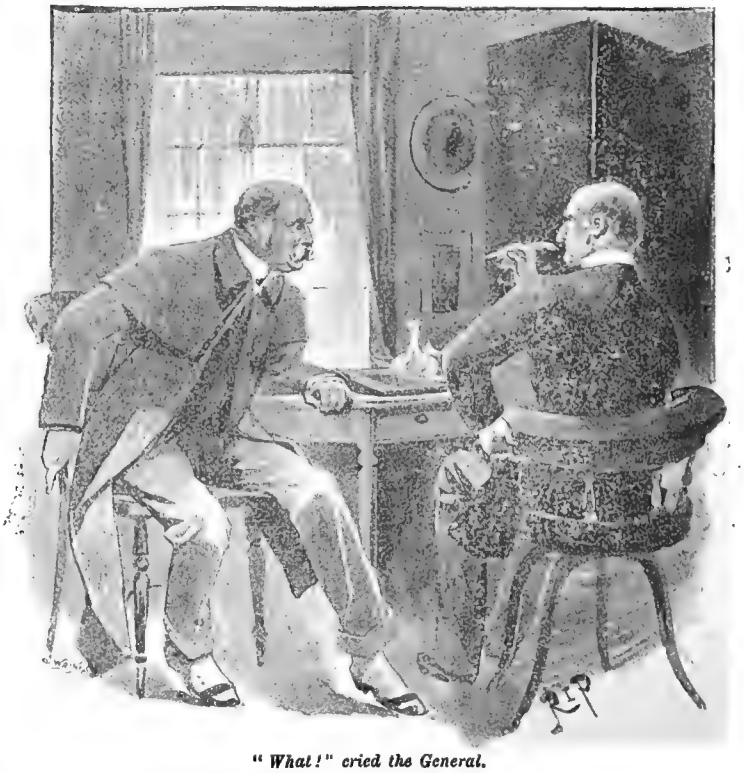
"What!" cried the General, starting, and bending forward in his chair.

Mr. Quinton nodded.

"I know it for a fact," said he; "for the solicitors for the third mortgagees——"

"My cousin never mortgaged the Crosdale property!"

"Indeed you are mistaken, General. As I was saying, the solicitors acting for some of the mortgagees tried to get a client of mine to pay them off, and take a transfer of their mortgage; but as it was only a third mortgage, I advised him to have nothing to do with it. That was some time ago. I believe all the mortgagees have given the usual notices; and the property must be sold shortly. My belief is, it won't realise the money advanced, with interest and costs."



"What!" cried the General.

"So my cousin, Captain Byngham, is practically ruined?"

"Unless he has other resources, of which I know nothing."

The General's face had grown very dark within the last minute or two, and not without reason. More than once since his arrival at Seacombe Towers, Captain Byngham had spoken as if Crosdale were still his own in every sense of the word. He had deliberately thrown dust in Sir Arthur's eyes; and the General had no doubt that his intention had been to conceal his difficulties till he could get married to Leila, and then pay off his mortgages with his—the General's—money.

Now, this scheme did not at all recommend itself to Sir Arthur's mind. And it was not merely the fact that his cousin was poor that weighed with him. If the Captain had become penniless through no fault of his own, Sir Arthur might have hesitated about giving his consent to the match, but he would hardly have forbidden it (considering the relationship) if Leila had been bent on marrying her cousin. But Sir Arthur was convinced that Captain Byngham must have been recklessly extravagant, if not worse. And, besides, his sense of honour revolted from the deception (as he considered it) which the Captain had practised.

"My mind is made up," said the General abruptly, sitting bolt upright in his chair, and folding his arms across his breast. "I see that Captain Byngham is no fit husband for my daughter. He has never asked her, so far as I know; but it is well to be prepared for what might happen after my death. Please strike out what you have written—all these troublesome precautions—and put this down:

"All my property goes to my trustees. If my daughter remains unmarried, or marries with my consent or that of my trustees, the income is to go to her for her life, and to her husband if he survives her—the capital to her children, or, if she has none, to the founding of the Schools. But if she marries without my consent, or yours, she is merely to have an annuity of three hundred a year."

"That won't be enough temptation for a man like Byngham."

"And you had better put him down for an annuity of two hundred, paid quarterly. He may come to poverty, poor fellow. I shouldn't like him to starve. But the annuity is to cease if he marries my daughter without my consent, or that of my trustees. That's plain enough, I think?"

"Perfectly clear and plain; and, if I may say so, a very sensible will to make. But, if you desire your trustees not to consent to a marriage between your daughter and Captain Byngham, you had better give us these instructions in writing."

"Very good. I will write the letter now, and date it to-morrow. Can you let me have a sheet of paper? It is, as you say, advisable to have it down in black and white."

The letter was written; and then the General added a few instructions for legacies to servants and to local charities, besides a thousand pounds to Geoffrey Dundas.

"When can you let me have the will for signature?" he said finally, rising as he spoke.

"It will be ready by noon to-morrow."

"Then you had better send it by train to Torwyn—that's our nearest station. If you will let your clerk give it to the guard of the 1.40 train, I will send over to Torwyn for it. Then I can sign it the same afternoon, and send it back to you by post. I had rather you kept it in your safe."

Mr. Quinton promised that the will should be despatched by the specified train without fail; and the General, having finished his business at Plymouth, went home by the next train.

(To be continued.)

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A HALT at DAWN.

MARGARET DANVERS stepped into the Edinburgh express one stormy March evening, and as she walked composedly to her seat in the middle of the corridor train, the eyes of every person present were riveted upon her. She wore a closely-fitting garment of Russian sable, which enveloped her completely, and a large beaver hat with drooping plumes, and from the single fine diamond flashing at her throat to the tips of her dainty Suéde boots she looked the model of a fashionable beauty.

She was the only woman in the carriage, and before she had settled herself comfortably, all the men had mentally pronounced their opinion of her looks and style, and hazarded a conjecture as to her age. Her attendant, a florid man of middle age, received the slight degree of attention justified by his seeming only an adjunct of the moment. As he left her, he put into her hands a bunch of costly roses, which she received with a smile, and laid upon the opposite seat the instant he was gone.

Of the score of passengers, two or three knew her by sight, for she was, in a way, a public character; but, as it happened, none were really acquainted with her, and before long, even those most deeply interested in her appearance yielded to the apathy peculiar to railway travellers at night, and subsided into their newspapers or their rugs, preparing to wear out the evening hours.

Margaret amused herself in watching the flying snow, and in reverie. Too used to travelling to even care to look about her, she yielded to the prevailing somnambulistic influence, just enough to dream without sleeping.

At first, there was in her mind a confusion of events—past, present, and to come. Incidents of no importance mingled with greater ones, and her reflections became mixed with little fanciful suggestions of things long since forgotten, or, rather, voluntarily put out of mind.

She tried to think of her career, to recall her triumphs, and to dwell upon the possibilities of the future. She told herself that music was her life, that all she had to do with was the beautiful and the divine in art, and that the every-day existence she had struggled to rise above was, henceforth, nothing more than an unpleasant memory.

At twenty-eight she was her own mistress, earning an independent income through the use of her beautiful voice. The teaching days and the drudgery of the class-room had passed, and as a concert singer she was already famous. After a successful winter in London, she was now upon her way to fulfil several provincial engagements, which promised more than anything in which she had yet engaged. She was in the heyday of her powers; admired, in radiant health, conscious of her beauty and talent, and entirely satisfied with life.

What did it mean that, as she looked from the window with a proud smile upon her lips, some tantalising thoughts would intrude themselves, and the mind, so entirely self-poised, should feel, for the first time in years, the weakening influence of some emotional fancies? It was her boast that she was never lonely, never sad; that her whole heart was in her work.

In front two men were talking.

"Never saw a promise of a worse storm," said one. "Shouldn't wonder if the line was blocked as we go farther north."

"Comes from the north-east," suggested the other. "If necessary, they'll put on another engine. We're bound to go through on this train, that's one comfort."

By nine o'clock Margaret, enveloped in a downy wrapper of dark red, lay back on the cushions courting sleep. Over her was spread the fur ulster, none too warm above the rugs, even for her warm blood. The thermometer outside was standing below zero, and whiffs of icy air found their way every now and then into the carriage.

Everything was quiet save her thoughts, which began to utter themselves with loud, importunate voices, as if answering some call without, independent of her control.

"I have happily been able to say all my life that I didn't know what nerves were," said Margaret to herself, "but I begin to think that from some inexplicable cause I am nervous."

"Richard Allen!"

She started as if the words had been spoken in her ear. Swiftly memory flew back ten years, and she saw herself standing bareheaded at the gate of her father's house in the Highlands, where her childhood had been passed; and beside her, bending tenderly to catch her lightest word, the form of her first lover, then a poor, obscure young lieutenant in the army.

With an indifference scarce tinged with pity, since it hardly occurred to her in those days that men could really feel, she had met his pleading affection with an enthusiastic outburst of her ambition to lead the artiste's life, to spend her energies in self-development, and show what a woman wholly devoted to an intellectual and artistic life might become.

"You must not think that I am deficient in womanly sensibility," she had said to him, with one of those soft glances, of the meaning and effect of which she was entirely careless and unconscious. "But some women must remain spinsters, you know, and I think I am meant to be one of the sisterhood."

"You do not know yourself. The day will come when ambition will seem nothing to you; then the homely things, the real things, will take on their true value to your eyes, and a 'career' will seem a mere artificiality that has nothing to do with what is best and sweetest in life."

The words had passed her by as an idle phrase, evoked from disappointment. And she and Richard Allen had parted, he going to his post on the line in India, and she to Italy to study. And yet nothing passes from us entirely.

Here, without warning, without her intention, the little scene came up before her eyes; and she saw again the apple-orchard in blossom, the red brick chimney of the school across the way looming up in the moonlight, the hills in the distance, the strong, proudly-carried figure at her side. And then scene after scene came up before her, always with the two figures present—the manly, devoted lover, the self-absorbed girl.

She tried to be cynical, to laugh, to think of something else; she tried her best to get to sleep, but only her will could sleep, and fancy still rioted. Richard Allen had had the making of a fine man in him: what had become of him—why had nothing been heard of him? The woman whose religion was success, had little patience with patience; it seemed to her that all virtue was embodied in some sort of action.

A man, who at forty—he must be forty—was still obscure, was not worth a thought. And yet he had possessed a sort of strength she had been forced to admire in old times—a suggested moral superiority—a higher point of view than she considered practical. If he had brought himself to live up to his own standard, he must have been unable to make necessary concessions.

And then, as Margaret recalled some "concessions" she

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had herself made to success, she felt her cheeks burn in the darkness. How often she had traded upon her own attractions; how often made use of the influence of her personality to bring about certain ends! If she had not lied in words, she had in acts. Her present status had not been attained without some sacrifice of scruples.

Long after midnight she lost consciousness, and passed an hour in fitful slumber. It was cruel that she should have to dream of Richard Allen; dream that they were together in an open boat drifting out to sea, and that his arms were round her, his eyes looking into hers. And she cared for nothing, thought of nothing, but that he held her close—how strangely sweet it was!——

A jar, a shock, a sudden stop, as if the train had run against a wall of rock, and Margaret started up and drew the curtains aside instinctively. A fall through space—what was it, oh, where was she? Had the train fallen down an embankment?

After a minute she realised that she had been thrown from her seat across the corridor; that other persons lay about, some groaning, some hastily picking themselves up. She shut her eyes; there was a sharp pain in her left arm, and a weight upon her side. A falling lamp had struck her, and from some cause she could not rise; her leg must be broken. There was a terrible confusion, much talking, and half-a-dozen people bending over her pityingly and asking her questions.

"What has happened? Is anyone killed?" she asked.

Several persons answered at once. They had run into a goods train. The engine driver on the express was killed; no one else. Many were hurt. Could she bear to be moved?

"I must," she returned, setting her lips, for agonising pains began to shoot through her foot, and the thought of being touched was suffering.

"Fortunately we are just on the outskirts of Frith—there are houses near."

It was the guard who spoke now, and he at once took charge. She was lifted carefully, wrapped in rugs, and carried out. Their carriage had sustained less damage than any other, being in the rear, and there was no difficulty in getting free.

"If she could stand it to be taken over yonder," said someone, pointing to a house some distance away, "she'd be more comfortable, I think."

"Where are we?" asked Margaret, bravely, suppressing her pain.

"Somewhere across the border—a little town called Frith," a man answered her.

"If she could stand it to be taken over to the doctor's house," said the persistent first speaker.

"I can stand it," she interposed. "Take me there quickly."

They improvised a sort of rough litter of carriage seats, and carried her across a field in the open country. The dawn was just breaking, and the pale moon was slowly fading out of sight before the great coming light.

The air was clear, cold, and crisp; and, though there had evidently been a heavy storm during the night, it had cleared completely, and the first ray of sunlight glittered upon banks of frozen snow.

The house before which they stopped was a plain, two-storeyed structure of brick, which seemed at first sight, peculiarly barren-looking. Clean white curtains hung in straight folds at the windows.

The door had been drab in colour; but the paint had been so assiduously scrubbed that one now took its presence on trust. There was a brass knocker and a rush door-mat, on which lay a large black cat with bristling white whiskers.

The door was opened by a girl, whose starched cap and apron suggested careful housekeeping, as her suspicious countenance suggested inhospitality. She made no objections to admitting them, however, and Margaret was carefully deposited upon a couch in the sitting-room, to wait the coming of the doctor, who, the maid said, had just left the house to go to the scene of the wreck.

"We'll send him back to you, ma'am," one of the men assured her. "You ought to be 'tended to first."

The ungenial-looking maid proved herself to be not deficient in skill, even though sympathy was, in a measure, lacking. She made her guest as comfortable as she could. The shoe was cut from the swollen ankle, which was bathed and bandaged, and the hurts upon the shoulder and side were pronounced to be only bruises, which "the doctor would soon make all right." And then Margaret was left to herself while the girl went to make the inevitable "cup of tea" which was to set everything straight.

At first she lay perfectly still, seeing nothing and caring for nothing. Her mind was full of vexation and impatience over an accident which must delay the fulfilment of her engagement. It did not occur to her that it might have been worse; anything was bad enough.

After a while her eyes began to wander idly round the room. It seemed half sitting-room, half study. Folding doors divided it from the consulting-room at the back. There was a book-case, well filled; some good engravings on the walls; a few easy-chairs, covered with raw silk of a dull hue, much worn; and a writing-table between the windows, half covered with books and magazines. There was something agreeable to her taste in the air of the room. She could imagine it the abode of a man whose very poverty would never become squalid.

Upon the mantelpiece were a bronze clock and a pair of fine vases, dainty in tone and finish; they were the sole womanly touches about the place. Noting these details half indifferently, she lay back again and closed her eyes.

When she opened them again, they happened to glance directly over to a corner of the room which had before been dim, but was now illuminated by a shaft of sunlight. A carved bracket hung there, and on the shelf lay a singular-looking little instrument, shaped like a dagger, of Moorish device, the handle inlaid with gold, left rough and unpolished.

When Margaret saw this small object, she gave a little cry and tried to rise, but finding that impossible, she dropped back upon her pillows as if she had been shot, her eyes fixed upon the little instrument with a look of recognition that was half pleasure, half alarm. What strange trick was fate about to play her? How could this thing be possible?

There was a noise; the front door opened, and someone came along the hall with a firm, measured step. Margaret's heart, that well-regulated organ, beat to suffocation. She hardly dared listen or look. She threw her arm up over her forehead, nearly concealing her face. Someone entered the room, and paused beside her.

A well-remembered voice, graver, deeper than of yore, yet with a cheery ring in it, said, "Let me see what I can do to help you, madam." A chair was drawn up to the side of the couch, a gentle hand took her own. Her pulse was beating furiously; the hand was held rather long, as if something perplexed him. She felt searching eyes bent upon her face, and suddenly threw down her arm. The doctor drew back, his face turning pale, and the two looked at each other for a minute in silence. She spoke first, putting out her hand timidly.

"Richard, don't you remember me?"

"Remember you? As if I were likely ever to forget you."

She softly touched his empty left sleeve, pinned over his breast, two tears standing in her eyes.

"In Afghanistan," he said. "I have got over minding it. Don't cry."

"You left the army?"

"Yes, four years ago. My health gave way. I studied medicine in India, was invited here by an old friend to become his assistant, and shortly afterwards he died. That is all."

"You never—never——"

"Yes; I married."

The words were an unexpected stab. Margaret gasped, amazed that she should care. Her face suddenly became suffused with colour, and she turned it away.

"She only lived a year, Margaret," said the doctor, bending down to study the fair flushed face suddenly pain-smitten.

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"My arm!" said Margaret faintly, drawing his attention to the lesser hurt.

He was the doctor again at once, and for the next half-hour all professional gravity, and as impersonal as the sphinx; yet the woman felt through every nerve, like a musical vibration, the thrill of his firm warm fingers, the scrutiny of his eyes.

He was changed, worn through suffering rather than years, his face lined, his hair grown grey; with nothing young about him but his eyes, which sparkled with a cheer and brightness no grief could dim, for they mirrored a mind above all personal considerations, concerned with those large loving interests belonging to humanity.

The doctor came and went quietly, her eyes following him. When he intercepted the look she blushed like a school-girl. Too busy all that day to give her more than necessary attention, he yet lost nothing that passed, and she had a sense which was oddly pleasant that he understood something of what was passing in her mind. It was terrible too.

There were moments when she wished herself miles away. Besides all the physical pain which she endured that long day, Margaret's soul was the battle-ground of a struggle far more exhausting. Ambition, pride, and love of the world fought hard against a tender, newly-born impulse, which it seemed that a single breath of reason ought to chill to death.

The coals burned red in the grate; a little tea-table was set in the middle of the room, and in the easiest chair in the house, piled with all the available cushions, the doctor placed Margaret, taking his position opposite her. The solemn girl brought in supper, which was well cooked and served with a scrupulous cleanliness that almost atoned for the absence of a more dainty service.

The doctor's face shone with satisfaction, but his manner although genial, was ceremonious. Margaret felt that, in the few feet intervening between them, there lay years of care and grief and disappointment. She felt a yearning to bridge the chasm, to draw nearer to him, even though she herself had to take the hard steps towards understanding.

Thought the woman: "Does he love me still?" And, thought the man: "Is she tired of the world, and could she learn to love me now?"

But they spoke of music; of camp life on the Eastern frontier; of what they had seen, what they had read. Not a word of what they felt. A few hours later, the doctor stood in his bare soldier's bed-room, and looked in his glass. For five minutes he studied himself, and then he turned away, resolved to let no new hope spring up in his heart But Margaret slept to dream of him, woke through the night, thinking of him, as she could not have thought in the old days, when he wooed her in the confidence of his fresh, hopeful youth.

There was no hotel in the village, and the few scattered houses were crowded with the wounded passengers, waiting until they were well enough to proceed with their journey. Margaret was not sorry that there was no other place for her, than the refuge she had been taken to. "I am thinking that I am singularly fortunate in being in the doctor's house, where I get special attention," she said to him, with a little fluttering smile.

In time these shy looks wrought upon the doctor, and his stern resolution wavered. He found himself sounding her preferences and attachments, with the unconfessed design of extracting some unguarded word that might indicate a change in her old convictions. Carrying on together these two processes—determination to refrain and resolution to pursue, which often accompanies some course of action embraced in accordance with a natural, unworldly judgment, he managed to betray to the eager girl all he wished to conceal and she wished to know.

She had telegraphed to Edinburgh that she would be there in ten days. Four of them had passed, and she was free from pain and able to put her foot to the ground. The doctor persisted in helping her from the couch to the chair and back again.

"But I can walk alone now," she objected.

"We must be careful. Not until to-morrow."

She protested with greater earnestness.

"True, I have but one arm," he said, with the first accent of bitterness she had heard from him. Her lips parted to give utterance to a sudden rush of words, but she only looked at him, with eyes so eloquent that he answered the look.

"Margaret, do you care? Dear, I have always loved you, I love you now—can you care?"

She drooped her head on his shoulder, but said nothing. The doctor held her close for a minute, and then, leaving her, began to walk up and down the room.

"It is impossible."

"It may be impossible," murmured Margaret, with a little blush, "but it is true."

"It is cruel to ask it, dear. You are young, beautiful, brilliant—with success at your feet, and I——"

She put up her hand imploringly. It was caught and held. "And I am poor, obscure, and—old," he finished, his eyes upon her face.

"I have come to you, Richard. It seems strange to me, I cannot explain it; but it seems as if everything the world has to offer me is nothing beside——"

"Beside my love?" he bent on one knee beside her chair and put her hand to his lips.

"I want to share your life," she said, and a new expression grew upon her face; a high, devoted look which was half heroic, all womanly. "I want to learn something of the great things, the true things."

"You have had greater things than I can give you. Think of all you are leaving!"

She made a gesture of renunciation. "It does not seem much to leave——for you."

"Ah, my darling, I am afraid you will regret it. The work-a-day world will be a trial to you. And mine is a veritable work-a-day world."

He kept his eyes on her face, half dreading to see her shrink away. But what woman is not won by an appearance of self-renunciation? Richard could not have let her go now. At the last instant he would have snatched her to his breast, had she drawn away. But the misgiving that rushed over him so fiercely was a real one, a sensible one. He felt it profoundly, and tried to read in her eyes a shadow of this coming regret. But her eyes were clear, loving, radiant. She pressed herself against his breast, and gave him the great gift of her life and her future. Would the shadow ever come?

The moon looked softly in an hour later, and, finding the lovers in that delicious dream which once in a lifetime comes to most men and women, drew over her face a grey cloud-veil, and left them to dream on.

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FAR beyond the lights of the château, where the Countess de L—— was receiving the tributes of the most noble families of France, stood two persons. One was Mme. D'Abrant and the other Louis Condrac.

"Thank heaven, Clarette, we are alone for a moment. I began to think you could never get away."

"So I thought also; my husband grows more and more suspicious every day. I have hardly been out of his sight for a week."

"Oh, my poor, poor darling! How you can stand it I could never see. Clarette, why don't you do as I have wished? I have asked you, begged you, again and again, to leave this man who is so odious to you. Come with me. Surely, you love me enough to dare to attempt this?"

"Yes, Louis, I love you," she answered, taking both his hands in hers; "love you more than words can tell, and you know it, dear. Yet when I think of this—of leaving him—my husband—oh, I don't know——What was that?" she whispered, breathlessly. "I thought I heard a step on the gravel."

"There is nothing there," answered Condrac. "See, the whole path lies bathed in the moonlight."

"I could have sworn—but perhaps there was nothing. It is too late for me to stay longer; we shall be missed——"

"Promise me, Clarette, before you go, that you will leave this hateful man, and become mine for ever. Darling, will you promise?"

She extended her arms and whispered:

"Yes, Louis, I will."

"Scoundrel!" shouted a hoarse voice, as, white with passion, M. D'Abrant sprang into the pathway confronting Condrac "Rascal! Villain! Dog!"

There was a short struggle; the two men fell to the ground. Then came a flash, the report of a pistol, and Louis Condrac rose pale and trembling, with the perspiration rolling in great drops from his forehead.

. . . . . .

The celebrated trial was ended at last, and Louis Condrac was found guilty. There had been but two witnesses, Mme. D'Abrant, who swore that she had heard the pistol shot, and hastening to the spot had found her husband alone and dead; and the officer of the police, who had seen Condrac leaving the grounds of the château.

Other evidence than this there was none; no sound had been heard by the guests at the château. The weapon used could not be identified as Condrac's, and all through the trial Condrac had protested his innocence. Popular sympathy was with him, for D'Abrant was disliked by everyone; but justice could not be satisfied by this, and Condrac was condemned to die.

. . . . . .

The first faint beams of light gilded the sombre walls of the huge prison-house. The day will pass quickly, and when the sun rises again the massive gates will be thrown open, and Louis Condrac will walk forth for the last time on earth.

In his cell the prisoner paced rapidly to and fro in great mental anxiety. Then, stopping, he looked round at the huge walls and unyielding bars, at the heavy locks, at the convict who had been placed in the cell to bear him company in his last hours—and then—throwing himself upon his cot, fell into a troubled sleep.

Waking suddenly he rushed to the bars, and shouted loudly to the keeper:

"Tell M. le Commandant that I must see him at once—that I have important news to tell him."

It seemed to Condrac, sitting on the edge of his cot, almost an eternity before he returned.

"Well, M. Condrac," exclaimed the commandant as he entered, "is there anything I can do for you this morning?"

"Sir," began Louis nervously, as he started up, "you know that I have always asserted my innocence. It was true that I loved the wife of M. D'Abrant, yet, knowing this, what possible benefit could I achieve by killing him? None at all. You have yourself believed me to be innocent, and for that I thank you.

"All last night I paced my cell in despair, as yonder poor wretch can testify.

"Wearied with the exertion, I threw myself on the bed and fell into a deep sleep. I thought that I mounted the fatal scaffold; the sea of faces surrounded me.

"Suddenly, a man standing at the foot of the steps cried out, in a loud voice: 'Look! Behold the murderer of Monsieur D'Abrant!' so vivid was the dream that I can see him as well as if he stood before me now.

"He was of a very pale complexion, wore a light grey suit, with a pink and white tie. In his button-hole was a flower, which was white. He had a silk hat, gloves and gaiters; his hair was dark, and he had a trimmed beard tinged with grey. It was so real that I cannot rid myself of the impression that it made."

"Still, M. Condrac, I am unable to aid you. Although I do not believe you guilty, I see no way to save you. If you wish to see me again during the day, or if there is anything more that I can do for you, let me know."

As the cell-door closed heavily behind him, Louis Condrac breathed a sigh, almost, one would think, of relief.

. . . . . .

The morning of the execution! The bell has already begun to toll, and the spectators are getting impatient. Ah! the prison doors swing open, and the crowd peers forward eagerly to get a view of the prisoner. At each side walks a gendarme; a clergyman in his robes precedes him, reading the last petition for mercy.

As Condrac mounts the platform he turns, staggers backward, and almost shrieks out:

"Look! Behold the murderer of M. D'Abrant!"

The commandant, though not a superstitious man, turns pale as he hears the words of the dream.

"There! He stands before you! The murderer!"

At the foot of the scaffold stood a man, dressed in grey, exactly as Condrac had described. The commandant leaped down from the platform, and seized the stranger roughly. The man, who was white and trembling at the words of Condrac, broke down.

"It is true," he cried, "all too true, that I, and I alone, am the murderer of M. D'Abrant. See! Here are the letters and papers saturated with blood, that I had only time to secure. Hearing steps, I turned and fled. What fatal impulse has led me here I know not. But I pray you have mercy on me, a poor, guilty wretch!"

And the miserable man fell upon his knees, tears streaming down his face.

A great shout came up from the excited crowd. "Let Condrac go! Condrac is innocent! Free him! Release him!" One, more agile than the rest, sprang upon the scaffold, and with a single thrust cut the bonds.

Pressing his hand to his head Condrac walked down into the crowd as one dazed. They, more interested in the new prisoner than the old one, let him pass by unmolested and he disappeared. Nor was he ever seen again. Three days later the self-betrayed criminal was examined before the officers of the police.

It was Mme. D'Abrant.

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Curious Experiments IN CORPULENCY

"A Mr. Russell, author and specialist in obesity, has experimentally tried the effect of administering large doses to moderate lean persons of his well-known herbal discovery, which is so marvellously effectual in reducing superfluous fat, with the result that there is not the slightest alteration or diminution of weight recorded, thereby proving conclusively to our minds that it is only the unhealthy adipose waste tissue which is destroyed, for after dispensing a few fluid ounces of his remarkable vegetable compounds he succeeds in destroying the diseased fatty mass at the rate of from 2 lb. to even 12 lb. in seven days. There can be no ambiguity about it, for any persons can test this for themselves by standing upon a weighing machine. He explains that all lean persons carry a certain amount of fat necessary for the natural production of heat in the body, but Nature has only stored up her requisite stock in the healthy system, which she most zealously guards, and thus declines to part with an ounce to the persuasions of Mr. Russell's vegetable tonic, however immoderate the dose may be, which testifies abundantly to the fact that it is only a chemical solvent of insalubrious adipose tissue. There is no doubt that the inventor of the composition must have possessed a profound vegetal knowledge in selecting this simple but peculiar combination.

"Those who resort to the pernicious products of the mineral kingdom, or even the deleterious sections of the vegetable world, doubtless can decoct something powerful but injurious in its action; such, however, require no laudatory commendation; but Mr. Russell (we herewith append his address: Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., the author of 'Corpulency, and the Cure,' 256 pages, price 4d. stamps) makes no secret of the simplicity of his treatment, and avers that the decoction can be drank as a refreshing summer drink, pleasant to the palate, yet having sufficient effect, although perfectly harmless, to remove generally 2 lb. or more in twenty-four hours. We think stout persons would do well to send for his book, which can be obtained through booksellers, or at the address given above."—*Leeds Times*, December 1, 1894.

TO METAMORPHOSE FAT PERSONS

"We were reading in the 'Penny Illustrated Paper' how to reduce obesity, wherein it says in that very excellent publication: 'The corpulent will be glad to learn how to lose two stone in about a month with benefit to health, strength, and muscle, by a comparatively new system. It is a singular fact that the patient, returning quickly to a healthy state with increased activity of brain, digestive, and other organs, naturally requires more food than hitherto; yet, notwithstanding this, he absolutely loses in weight one to two pounds daily, as the weighing machine will prove. The Book, "Corpulency and the Cure" (256 pages), containing the "recipe," can be had gratis from Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., by sending cost of postage, fourpence.' He has discovered a simple herbal remedy, most pleasant to the taste, which entirely disposes of the necessity of starving oneself in endeavouring to be rid of all superfluous matter. An interesting point, which goes to prove that the almost magical compound is beyond doubt harmless, is that in prescribing it in a tentative way to lean persons, or rather to those who carry no superfluity of fat beyond that which is required as fuel for Nature's furnace, the medicine is absolutely inoperative, attacking only that unhealthy, disease-creating waste accumulation which is the burden of the fat creature's existence. In many cases where people take decoctions reputed to be new medical discoveries to cure some specific disease, they may recover by the action of the medicine, or Nature may have effected her own cure. In the case of corpulency, if a simple remedy undertakes to reduce a person, say, 7 lb. in a week, all that one has to do is to get weighed, and thus prove it conclusively. So it is with Mr. Russell's compound, but he asks you to prove it in twenty-four hours only."—*Coventry Standard*, January 18, 1895.

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ALL THROUGH ONE GATE.

LET us fancy a state of affairs like this: Suppose that nothing to eat could be raised or produced in England; suppose a war, in which all the ports of England were so effectively and continuously blockaded that no food whatever could be imported for a year. What would become of the people? At best only a few could leave the country; the vast majority must remain. The question answers itself. Such a situation is not likely to occur; God forbid that it ever should, but the grim fancy may teach some of us a lesson that we can use to advantage.

For example, a lady is speaking of an occasion when she was very ill. What her ailment was she did not know. It first appeared in November, 1890. Up to that time she says she had been healthy and strong; never needed a doctor. At that time she felt, not so much that she had been *attacked* by illness as that she had *lapsed* into it. She was languid, tired, and weak, without perceiving any reason why she should be so. "At first," she says, "my appetite failed me, and I had no desire for food. I could partake only of liquids, and after the simplest diet I had great pain at the chest. Sometimes I was seized with giddiness, and had pain across the forehead and temples.

"I became so low and weak that I was confined to my room for a fortnight, and could barely walk across the floor. I continued to grow worse, losing strength daily. In the early part of December, 1890, I thought I would try a medicine that had greatly benefited my two daughters, one of whom had suffered from weakness and indigestion, and the other from poorness of the blood.

"The name of the medicine is Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup, and I procured it from Mr. Shirtcliff, the chemist, in Goldhawk Road. After I had taken the Syrup two days I found myself a little better. My appetite returned, and what I ate digested and gave me strength. By the time I had taken two bottles I was completely cured, and have since been in the best of health, not requiring medicine of any kind. I have recommended Mother Seigel's Syrup to many of my friends, and they have found benefit from its use If by publishing this letter other sufferers may come to know of the curative powers of this medicine, you are at liberty to make it public. I will answer any inquiries. Yours truly (Signed) Mrs. S. Buckingham, 23, Oaklands Grove, Shepherd's Bush, London, September 16th, 1892."

The reader will notice that Mrs. Buckingham speaks of her two daughters, one of whom had been cured of weakness and indigestion, and the other of poorness of the blood, by the Syrup. On this point we merely desire to suggest that both the young ladies were (as their mother knew) troubled with the same complaint—one perhaps in a stage a trifle more advanced than the other. Poverty of the blood means simply a lack in it of the vital elements, which food alone can supply; and no food can supply them unless it is perfectly digested. Thousands of women are thus afflicted, and are being constantly saved by the effect of Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup on the stomach and the other digestive organs.

Then, what do we make of the illustration which introduces this article? This: The human body is like the population of a great country—it must be fed. Every muscle, bone, and bit of flesh is merely food altered into that form by the digestion. Yes; even more than this. Our illustration goes deeper than we thought. While it is not supposable that England could fail of assistance from her own soil, the human body *in no way helps itself.* All its support must come from the outside, and all pass through *one gate*—the stomach.

We thus see the great work done by the Syrup in keeping this gate always open and available.

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